



STATE OF WASHINGTON
COMMISSION ON HISPANIC AFFAIRS
COMISIÓN DE ASUNTOS HISPANOS

Yvonne Lopez-Morton,
Chair

March 2, 2006

Gabriel Portugal,
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Executive Committee

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Education Committee

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Lourdes Portillo
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Education Committee

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Graciela Villanueva
Lopez,
Executive Committee

Rebecca Villareal,
Chair-Economic
Development
Committee

Uriel Iñiguez,
Executive Director

The Honorable Christine Gregoire
Office of the Governor
PO Box 40002
Olympia, WA 98504-0002

Dear Governor Gregoire,

Education has been a key issue during the 2006 Legislative Session. Issues presented by constituents, educators, students, etc. during the session strongly exemplify the need to improve our public education system.

Guiding children from the kindergarten steps to the graduation stage is a challenging journey for parents and families. Research shows that one of the most crucial elements in a successful educational journey is meaningful parent and community involvement. This important element was emphasized in my education report to the Washington Learns K-12 Advisory Committee earlier this year.

HB 3127 takes action on this recommendation by creating a comprehensive and intended system to connect schools, parents, and communities. The bill will provide an education ombudsman office that will serve as a single entry point for parents and families to access resources, referrals, support, and other critical information regarding the educational system. Furthermore, the bill provides for an advisory committee that reports directly to the governor and will be comprised of parents and communities whose children have been left behind by the current system.

This advisory committee is an integral element of HB 3127; however, during the legislative process it was demoted to a potential subcommittee of the State Board of Education. This demotion seriously compromises the effectiveness of the advisory committee. We strongly believe that an independent—but

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210 11th Avenue SW, Suite 301A PO Box 40924 Olympia, WA 98504-0924
Toll-Free: (800) 443-0294 Olympia: (360) 725-5661 Fax: (360) 586-9501
www.cha.wa.gov hispanic@cha.wa.gov

centralized—advisory committee to the governor will provide authentic recommendations to guide policy decisions.

As governor, you have taken bold leadership to improve public education by chairing Washington Learns. We applaud and thank you for your willingness to convene an advisory committee. It undeniably demonstrates your continued commitment to this project.

We the Commission on Hispanic Affairs, therefore, strongly urge you to take one more step in your commitment to Education by supporting this bill.

Respectfully,

Uriel Íñiguez
Executive Director

LEGISLATIVE TESTIMONY



COMMISSION ON HISPANIC AFFAIRS

The Commission on Hispanic Affairs supports SHB 3241

Background

SHB 3241 provides students that are not on track to graduate on time; the opportunity for an appropriate learning environment. In addition, this bill will benefit the Hispanic community by:

- Providing options for a student to complete a high school degree
- Offering various times of day to fit a working persons schedule, including evenings and weekends
- Allowing for a percentage of tuition increases to assist needy students

There are several reasons that Hispanics have high rates of delayed education which correlates with lower high school graduation rates and higher drop-out rates including, among others:

1. **Mobile families in the migrant community**
2. **Higher levels of poverty which could mean children experience more family worries or quit school to help support their family**
3. **Higher levels of self care – which means older children are at home acting as caretaker of younger siblings, rather than focusing on school (afterschoolalliance.org)**
4. **More parents with low levels of education are unable to assist their children with homework, social adjustment, etc.**
5. **Language learner needs (All but #3, Cortese, 1992).**

Specific Issues

According to OSPI, only 54% of Hispanics graduated on time in 2004 (Bylsma & Ireland). For those students who did not graduate on time, the option of completing a degree elsewhere may prevent those students from simply dropping out.

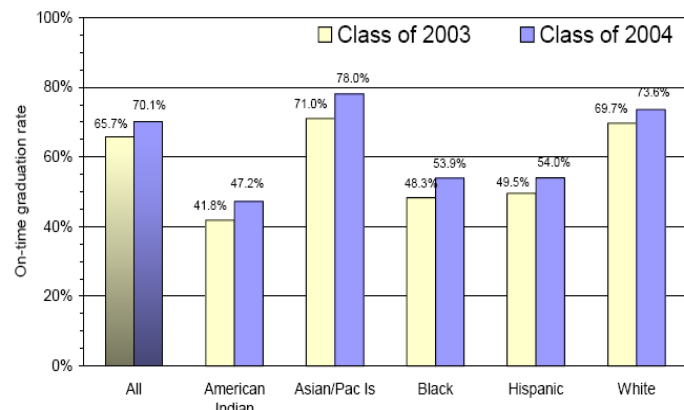
(GRAPH: *Graduation and Drop-out Statistics for Washington's Counties, Districts and Schools, 2003-04*, Bylsma & Ireland)

In Washington State, only 14% of Hispanic 4th graders were considered proficient on the National Assessment of Educational Progress. By the time they reached 8th grade, only 15% of Hispanic students were proficient; with nearly half of both groups only at the Basic level. Respectively, White students scored higher by 26 and 23 points in 4th and 8th grade.

Conclusion

SHB 3241 is a common sense approach that will aid the numbers of students not graduating on time. Allowing for options to complete a degree will improve the state's drop-out rate and the Commission on Hispanic Affairs believes this will mean a positive impact for the community.

Figure 13: Comparison of On-Time Graduation Rates by Race/Ethnicity



The people of the State of Washington have tasked the Commission on Hispanic Affairs with advising the Governor, the Legislature, and state and local agencies on issues that affect the Latino community of the State. The Commission meets with members of the Latino community six times a year throughout the state to gather information as to their concerns.



The Commission on Hispanic Affairs Supports HB 2423

Background

HB 2423 will assist all students in Washington State with their success in school. Specifically, the Commission supports the bill because it will have a positive impact on Hispanic students given that this is a population whose school performance can be impacted by many outside factors including:

- Language barriers
- First-generation student status
- High drop out rates

Specific Issues

Research indicates that guidance and other forms of school counseling are more effective for Hispanic children when there is cultural awareness on the part of the counselor (Baruth & Manning, 1992). HB 2423 will provide students information and options that are available to them beyond high school, assist students in selecting curriculum that will promote their career interests, and provide another link to connect parents to their children's education. There is; however, no language in the bill that states that such work must be executed in a culturally competent manner.

Strong guidance programs would inform students of the many options that are available to them upon completion of high school. HB 2423 tasks counselors with more than just informing students of these options. In addition, it creates a "mentor relationship" that would provide the student with someone who cares about them and their success. For many students, especially those with academic struggles, having someone take an interest in their education and self-worth can be a deciding factor in staying in school or dropping out.

Drier and Gysbers guide *Guidance and Counseling Programs for the Year 2000 and Beyond: Strengthening Work-Related Education and Training* cites research that demonstrates "that when guidance and counseling programs help individuals develop healthy self-images, view the future with hope and realism and become knowledgeable about the educational and work options, they are typically more satisfied with life and become positive contributors in society" (1993).

Improvements to the bill

The Commission recommends that a cultural competency requirement be added to the bill. An understanding of the diverse issues that Hispanic students face would assist counselors in being more effective in the execution of their work. Again, Baruth and Manning emphasized differences in the role of children, language, nonverbal communication, and socioeconomic status as issues that will require increased sensitivity on the part of the counselor.

The Commission strongly supports HB 2423 because we believe that with the creation of a strong guidance and planning program it would undeniably assist students in planning for their future regardless of whether our recommendation is considered or not.



The Commission on Hispanic Affairs Recommends Changes to HB 2489

Background

The Commission on Hispanic Affairs supports the premise of HB 2489 in that it attempts to offer help to students failing to pass their assessments. The Commission; however, recommends changes in the language of the bill. HB 2489 suggests classifying students who are at risk of failing to pass their assessments. The classification of students as “high, moderate, or low risk” students can create stigma both from other students and from teachers as well.

The Problem of Labeling

The North Central Regional Educational Laboratory (NCREL) cites findings that “note that the traditional placement of first-grade students into three reading groups of high, middle, and low achievement predicts the future educational outcomes with alarming accuracy (Allington, 1995, p. 2). In a separate research brief, NCREL states that using ability grouping can contribute to the stigmatization of students placed in these groups (Letgers, McDill, & McPartland, 1993). This type of approach would strongly impact minority and socioeconomically disadvantaged students, for they are the ones most likely to have academic performance problems.

Jones and Collier state that the impact of labeling students can follow them beyond the elementary and secondary levels into higher education (ERIC, 1990). Through their research, they discuss the lack of efficiency with regard to teaching practices for high-risk students: specifically that expectation’s can be so low on the teachers’ part that programs are often too remedial for students. In due course, Jones and Collier believe that labeling programs have a negative impact on self-esteem and drop-out rates and eventually they affect the disproportional numbers of minorities in higher education.

Students should be offered opportunities for assistance when they are failing to pass their assessments. Those opportunities should include extra help from teachers, summer school, and evening classes. These offerings should not require that students be labeled.

Suggestions regarding the bill

The Commission recommends the following regarding HB 2489:

- Remove labels that place children in programs based on level of risk
- Ensure that programs will assist struggling students and be of an appropriate complexity level
- Keep student programs that offer flexible options such as summer school or evening school programs.

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Legislative Testimony - 2498

Contact: Uriel Iñiguez, CHA Director (360) 725-5660 uiniiguez@cha.wa.gov



The Commission on Hispanic Affairs Supports HB 2501

Background

HB 2501 provides for outpatient and inpatient mental health services to be provided for group health plans. Mental health services are vital to a community's overall well-being, and the Commission supports the passage of HB 2501.

The National Health Care Disparities Report (NHCDR) states that nationally, the cost of inadequate mental health care includes:

- \$69 billion in 1996 – direct cost of mental disorders
- \$75 billion – lost productivity and premature death
- Second leading cause of disability – 15% of disability-adjusted life-years

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, July 2003

Specific Issues

HB 2501 will positively impact most of the group plan insured community in Washington State. Providing coverage for patients with DSM IV defined mental health illnesses may increase early detection of mental health illnesses and prevent deterioration. Identifying mental health illnesses at their onset will also cost less than treatment of fully developed mental illnesses.

Disparities in health care for minorities are well documented. These disparities include mental health. The NHCDR states that “racial, ethnic and socioeconomic disparities in mental health care have been documented in use of psychiatric medications and of psychiatric outpatient, emergency, and inpatient services” (2003, p. 62).

The National Health Care Disparities Report also discusses the low numbers of people with mental health disorders and illnesses that seek help from the medical system. By providing insured access to mental health services, HB 2501 decreases the number of undiagnosed mental disorders and illnesses in Washington State. In Hispanic women, there is a 22.8% chance of having a depressive episode and Hispanic teens are at a 19.8% higher risk of attempting suicide, a rate that is higher than Whites and African Americans (Kaiser Foundation,

In *Mental Health Weekly*, Jane Delgado discusses the continuing disparity in all types of health care for Hispanics. Providing mental health benefits as part of insurance coverage acknowledges that mental health is as legitimate and important as physical health. In doing so, part of the stigma of mental health may be removed, resulting in positive health benefits for all. HB 2501 is a first step in acknowledging the importance of all aspects of a healthy person, including mental health.

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Legislative Testimony - 2501

Contact: Uriel Iñiguez, CHA Director (360) 725-5660 uinuez@cha.wa.gov



The Commission on Hispanic Affairs Supports HB 6348

Background

HB 6348 provides for legal representation of undocumented people in domestic violence, sexual assault, and human trafficking cases. Specifically, the Commission supports this bill because it will provide aid to helpless victims whose undocumented status makes them more vulnerable to the aforementioned crimes.

Specific Issues

In 2004, there were over 51,000 domestic violence calls made to the Police in Washington State. Unfortunately, domestic violence is one of the most underreported crimes in the US (wscadv.org). The following are some of the reasons why domestic violence victims in undocumented communities have more difficulty reporting domestic violence incidents:

- Fear of being deported
- Threats from abuser that include lies, such as the victim would be incarcerated
- Fear or lack of trust for law enforcement
- Language barriers
- Lack of knowledge about their rights or how the system works

In 2001, the Northwest Immigrant Rights Project (NWIRP), based in Seattle, served over 1,700 battered women and children. In their 2001 Annual Report, NWIRP states that many of the women they serve were being forced to maintain undocumented status as part of the abuse. This number warrants the need for legal services for domestic violence victims in Washington State.

Sex trafficking is also an area in which victims are in need of legal representation. Trafficked people do not have a choice when they are brought to this country. The Administration for Children and Families division of DHHS states that many sex trafficking schemes start with:

- A promise of a good job in another country
- A false marriage proposal turned into a bondage situation
- Being sold into the sex trade by parents, husbands, boyfriends
- Being kidnapped by traffickers

The Commission urges the legislature to take steps to remedy the crimes committed against undocumented people. HB 6348 is a lifeline for people to receive aid in a time of life-threatening need.

The people of the State of Washington have tasked the Commission on Hispanic Affairs with advising the Governor, the Legislature, and state and local agencies on issues that affect the Hispanic community of the State

Legislative Testimony - 6348

Contact: Uriel Iñiguez, CHA Director (360) 725-5660 uinuez@cha.wa.gov

2-23-06



In Support of HCR 4411 Creating a Joint Select Committee On Equitable Opportunity for All

Background

The Commission on Hispanic Affairs supports the creation of a Joint Select Committee on Equitable Opportunity for All. This resolution would provide for a group to be responsible for ensuring that the legislature has the necessary information to serve communities of color on education issues.

Washington Needs HCR 4411

The need for multi-cultural education is well documented in scholarly, national, and Washington specific research. In the Bias and Fairness Review report the panel states: "we found a number of instances where the language used in grade level content expectations constituted de facto bias and unfairness due to their lack of inclusion and consideration for various groups and cultures" (May, 2003).

Three relevant examples of the need for culturally competent education include:

- Seattle Public Schools taking action to review discipline policies to eliminate racial disparities (Seattle PI, June 2002).
- African-American students suing the Kent School District for using "excessive force and targeting them for discipline because of their race" (Seattle Times, May 2004).
- A Latino education summit held in Seattle to address the achievement gap between Latinos and others. The author states "The National Assessment of Educational Progress, referred to as the nation's report card, shows that by age 17, the average Latino student has math and reading skills that are the same as 13-year- old white students" (Seattle PI, March 2005).

The above information shows that different treatment by race and/or class in school is not going away. The Bias and Fairness Review Panel recommended that "there needs to be a concerted effort to ensure that all professional development and in-service activities focus on the issues of cultural competency, culturally relevant curricula, and multicultural infusion throughout all levels of the educational process" (May, 2003). The Commission believes this, along with other recommendations that a Committee on Equitable Opportunity could provide, would aid the legislature in making improvements for minorities in Washington schools.

Conclusion

The Commission on Hispanic Affairs believes the creation of the Committee on Equitable Opportunity for All will aid in addressing these important issues in the education system. HCR 4411 will involve leaders from communities of color and allow their voices to be heard in regards to the changes being made to the educational system. Ultimately, this bill will aid Washington in meeting its Constitutional requirement to "make ample provision for the education of all children residing within its borders, without distinction or preference on account of race, color, caste or sex" (Article 9, Section 1).

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LEGISLATIVE TESTIMONY



COMMISSION ON HISPANIC AFFAIRS

The Commission on Hispanic Affairs supports a moratorium on additional health care mandates as put forth in SHB 1685.

SHB 1685

- Puts a moratorium on additional health mandates after the effective date
- Requires the Insurance Commissioner to review all current health care coverage mandates

The Need for a Moratorium on Health Care Coverage Mandates

There has been much controversy over the pros and cons of mandated health care coverage and its effect on health care costs. Nonetheless, it is clear that health care costs are rising; and that low-income families struggle to meet this financial burden. The Working Health Care Coalition, an interdisciplinary partnership of organizations whose task it is to educate the public on the state's health care safety net, recently released a report titled, "Risky Business: Working People Losing Health Coverage."¹ The report found that health insurance premiums have risen four times faster than workers earnings with many low-income families paying up to 17% of their income in out-of-pocket expenses. The Coalition's conclusion is that "health insurance and other health care costs are simply becoming unaffordable for many Washington Families. Without the ability to reduce or eliminate major expenses such as housing or food, many are taking a calculated risk with their health and their children's health. They are forgoing health insurance in order to feed and house their kids, pay for clothing, and pay taxes."²

A 2002 report, by the Office of the Insurance Commissioner, cited 39 mandated health benefits. In 2004, the Legislature prohibited healthcare providers from denying injury treatment coverage when injuries resulted from the use of alcohol or narcotics. While these mandates were passed with the intention of protecting the health of Washingtonians, the simple fact is that Washingtonians cannot afford to pay for these mandated services. These mandates do not help Washingtonians, they hurt them. Funding the mandates means that health care is too expensive to afford at all. A moratorium on additional health care coverage mandates will help slow the rising cost of health care and make health care coverage a possibility for more families.

Additionally SHB 1685 calls on the Office of the Insurance Commissioner to conduct an actuarial review of existing health care coverage mandates to monitor program effectiveness.

Conclusion

SHB 1685 will help reduce the costs of health care in Washington State and make it more affordable for more families, thus reducing the number of uninsured and protecting the health and wellbeing of Washingtonians.

We hope that the committee will take this testimony into account when considering SHB 1685.

¹ "Risky Business: Working People Losing Health Care Coverage," The Working Health Care Coalition <workingforhealth.org/RiskyBusiness.pdf> 7 Feb 2006.

² "Risky Business," p2.

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Legislative Testimony - 1685

Contact: Uriel Iñiguez, CHA Director (360) 725-5660 uiñiguez@cha.wa.gov



COMMISSION ON HISPANIC AFFAIRS

The Commission on Hispanic Affairs Supports the Passage of 3SHB 1815

The Commission on Hispanic Affairs believes that 3SHB 1815 would be advantageous to the Hispanic community; especially with an addendum that would allow for training that is culturally relevant for minority business owners.

In the October 1996 issue of *Journal of Small Business Management*, Vincent examined the differences in small businesses owned by Anglos and by Mexican Americans with regard to variables that make for successful businesses. Some of those variables included decision-making strategies, strategic planning, and debt. This study was conducted with businesses in Texas (near the border between Texas and Mexico). The owners of these businesses all spoke English.

For Mexican American small business owners, Vincent found some important cultural differences that support the Commission's request that a cultural consideration be added to 3SHB 1815. These differences are: (All are direct quotes)

1. Data indicates that Hispanics operate under an all centric value system, meaning that Hispanics tend to be less individualistic, less competitive, and less inclined to be risk-takers than their Anglo-American counterparts.
2. Hispanics are more likely to conform to the opinions of their in-group members and to rely more heavily upon interpersonal relationships in formulating their decisions and strategies.
3. A Mexican-American entrepreneur is likely to be more concerned with how decisions would impact the family than with how they would impact the business. This cultural trait has been found to remain independent of the number of years a person has lived in the United States (Vincent from Marin and Marin, 1991).

According to Robert Fairlie in *Small Business Economics*, (Oct. 2004, Vol.23, Iss.3) Hispanics have the fourth highest self-employment rate. In addition the rate for Hispanic owned businesses has grown by over 200% since the late 80s. Many people could simply attribute this to the increased growth of the Hispanic population in the U.S. No matter what, this population unquestionably has small business assistance needs that must be addressed.

The Commission commends 3SHB 1815 for its language stating that loans be spread out throughout the state, knowing that many minorities reside on the Eastern side of the state. The census of small business ownership shows that Hispanic owned businesses grew from 10,009 in 1997 to 10,269 in 2002; that is an increase of 3% (Small Business Administration, Washington Profile 2005). This bill will be favorable for small businesses and we hope that the training and assistance it proposes will also address specific needs of minority business owners.

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Legislative Testimony - 1815

Contact: Uriel Iñiguez, CHA Director (360) 725-5660 uiniguez@cha.wa.gov

2-1-06

LEGISLATIVE TESTIMONY



COMMISSION ON HISPANIC AFFAIRS

The Commission on Hispanic Affairs strongly supports HB 2360

There is not sufficient information known about payday loans and potential predatory practices that can target low-income families in their time of desperation or need.

The Center for Responsible Lending, a national non-profit involved in research and policy that promotes responsible lending practices. They state that only 1% of payday loans are made to one time borrowers; most loans have to be “flipped” or renewed by requiring another fee and more interest is accrued on the original amount owed. This cycle can repeat many times over for low-income people who are living paycheck to paycheck and who are unable to pay the amount in full on this type of short term loan.

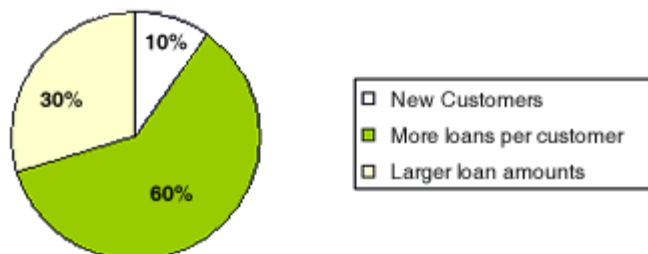
The Center for Responsible Lending also quotes “Pay Day Lenders Business Plans that state that business can pick up when people leave welfare rolls”, is unfortunately the result of the increasing number of people having to make ends meet on \$25,000 or less and the influx of the immigrant population (www.responsiblelending.org/payday/factfiction.cfm). The following are illustrations of the type of data Washington should have available regarding pay day loans. The following data is of pay day lenders in North Carolina.

Here's a comparison on various late fees compared to the average payday loan made in 2000 in North Carolina (\$255 in cash for two weeks):

| Transaction | Fees/ Month | APR |
|---|----------------|------|
| \$255 payday loan | \$90* | 391% |
| \$255 bounced check | \$43 | 202% |
| Late fee on \$255 credit card bill | \$30 | 141% |
| Late fee on \$800 mortgage (homeowner) | \$32 | 48% |
| Late fee on \$600 rent payment (renter) | \$30 | 60% |
| Late fee on \$300 car payment | \$15 | 60% |

* The vast majority of borrowers paid this fee over and over again for no “new money,” because they were caught in the debt trap.

Source of Payday Lender Revenue Growth (NC 1999-2000)



It is not known whether these accusations are true or not for Washington State, however an investigation into these matters will clarify what action, if necessary, needs to be taken to protect Washington's financially vulnerable citizens. Due to the high number of working poor and working class citizens that are minorities, the Commission strongly urges the legislature to proceed with HB 2360.

The people of the State of Washington have tasked the Commission on Hispanic Affairs with advising the Governor, the Legislature, and state and local agencies on issues that affect the Hispanic community of the State

Legislative Testimony - 2360

Contact: Uriel Iñiguez, CHA Director (360) 725-5660 iniguez@cha.wa.gov

2-1-06

LEGISLATIVE TESTIMONY



COMMISSION ON HISPANIC AFFAIRS

The Commission on Hispanic Affairs supports HB 2630

This bill will have a positive impact on the Hispanic workforce in Washington State. HB 2360 will assist both Washington employers in finding employable people and assist those in need of work through a training program. This bill is especially beneficial in that it provides for the creation of an opportunity grant program. This grant program will assist low income and minority people with access to the training needed to get a job that is in high demand.

The joint report by the Higher Education Coordinating Board, the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges and the Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board states that “If the state is to increase the supply of newly prepared workers with Mid-level preparation sufficient to meet the employer demand, it will take more than just relying on demographic growth in the student population; it will take policy changes to increase sufficiently this sub-baccalaureate capacity” (12/13/05). The report, *A Skilled and Educated Workforce: An assessment of the number and type of higher education and training credentials required to meet employer demand* (December, 2005) was generated as a result of HB3103 in 2004.

The above listed Boards found that there is a need for further training and education in order for Washington to maintain competitive with its workforce. The benefits of having more employed and employable people in the State of Washington surely outweigh the costs associated with this bill. An increase in employment will lead to a decrease in people who rely on government assistance, a decrease in people who turn to criminal activity as a means of support, and a better pool of qualified applicants for employers. The Commission on Hispanic Affairs believes that HB 2630 represents legislatures “finishing the work” that was started in 2004.

The people of the State of Washington have tasked the Commission on Hispanic Affairs with advising the Governor, the Legislature, and state and local agencies on issues that affect the Hispanic community of the State

Legislative Testimony - 2630

Contact: Uriel Iñiguez, CHA Director (360) 725-5660 uiniguez@cha.wa.gov

2-1-06

LEGISLATIVE TESTIMONY



COMMISSION ON HISPANIC AFFAIRS

The Commission on Hispanic Affairs supports requiring health impact assessments as put forth in 2SSB 6195.

2SSB 6195

- Creates a health impact assessment through the collaboration of the Governor's Interagency Council on Health Disparities and the State Board of Health

The Need for Health Impact Assessments

With the precarious state of health care, it is increasingly important to address disparities within Washington State's health care system. It is not fair that some groups, based on their race or ethnicity, receive a lesser quality of health care than the general population. 2SSB 6195 seeks to identify and correct these disparities and make health care more available to these groups.

Creating the health impact assessment will accomplish three specific goals:

- Open discussion on the topic of health disparities. Numerous studies have identified that particular demographics routinely experience health disparities. The health impact assessment will provide concrete information that will form the basis of a dialogue for lessening disparities and providing all groups access to health care.
- Some racial and ethnic groups affected by the health disparity are afflicted by certain diseases and health issues that are different from the general population. It is important to know how these groups are affected so that better care can be given.
- Lessening health disparities will improve the health care of the affected groups. Better care will improve the overall health of the state and will reduce health care costs in the long-run.

Conclusion

2SSB 6195 proposes a practical method to address the health disparity in Washington State. It is crucial that the State have information on the health disparity so that it can be eliminated. Empowering the State Board of Health and the Governor's Interagency Council on Health Disparities to conduct health impact assessments is a concrete step toward this goal.

We hope that the committee will consider these reasons when considering 2SSB 6195.

The people of the State of Washington have tasked the Commission on Hispanic Affairs with advising the Governor, the Legislature, and state and local agencies on issues that affect the Hispanic community of the State

Legislative Testimony - 6195

Contact: Uriel Iñiguez, CHA Director (360) 725-5660 uiniiguez@cha.wa.gov

2-16-06

LEGISLATIVE TESTIMONY



COMMISSION ON HISPANIC AFFAIRS

The Commission on Hispanic Affairs supports creation of the Governor's Interagency Coordinating Council on Health Disparities as put forth in 2SSB 6197.

2SSB 6197

- Creates the Governor's Interagency Coordinating Council on Health Disparities

Creating the Governor's Interagency Coordinating Council on Health Disparities

According to data collected by the Centers for Disease Control, in 2004 in Washington State, 18.3 percent of Hispanics and Multi-racial, 15.9 percent of Blacks, and 11 percent of other racial groups reported having fair or poor health.¹ This is compared with 12.2 percent of Whites reporting the same health status. These data is just one piece of evidence of the health disparity that exists in Washington State. This disparity means that Washingtonians of color are not receiving the quality of health care that is received by other demographic groups.

Health disparity is a serious issue because it relates to the health and well being of Washingtonians of color. The current health disparity puts their health at stake and inhibits their ability to lead full and productive lives. Creating the Interagency Coordinating Council on Health Disparities (Council) is a crucial step toward rectifying the disparities. The Council will help to facilitate discussion on this issue by bringing together state agencies, communities of color, and the public and private sector. The Council will be directed to study the current situation, providing concerned groups with accurate and current data and helping the government understand how it can better serve communities of color. Furthermore, the Council will report to the legislature every two years and will publish its findings by 2012. This shows that there is accountability on the part of the Council and it also demonstrates that the State is serious about affecting substantive change regarding health disparities.

Conclusion

2SSB 6197 is an important step in providing health care to communities of color and in understanding the circumstances that affect these communities. Creating the Interagency Coordinating Council on Health Disparities will armed with the government power of information and the possibility to improve health and quality of lives in Washington State.

We hope that the committee will take this testimony into account these when considering 2SSB 6197.

¹ Centers for Disease Control <apps.nccdc.cdc.gov/brfss/race.asp?cat=HS&yr=2004&qkey=1100&state=WA>, 16 Feb 2006.

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Legislative Testimony - 6197

Contact: Uriel Iñiguez, CHA Director (360) 725-5660 uiniiguez@cha.wa.gov

LEGISLATIVE TESTIMONY



COMMISSION ON HISPANIC AFFAIRS

The Commission on Hispanic Affairs supports greater access to individual health insurance coverage as put forth in ESHB 2540.

ESHB 2540

- Adds a consumer representative and removes an insurance industry representative from the board of the Washington State Health Insurance Pool (Pool)
- Authorizes the Insurance Commissioner to review and approve the standard health questionnaire
- Increases the amount of benefits the Pool can pay for per individual from \$1 million to \$2 million

Modifying the Washington State Health Insurance Pool

The health care crisis demands that action be taken to increase access to comprehensive health care and to make it affordable for all Washingtonians. ESHB 2540 has the makings of legislation with the power to create positive changes and improve the current situation:

- By increasing the amount of money that the Pool can spend per individual, the Pool will be able to provide its clients with greater access care throughout their time in the Pool
- Adding a consumer representative to the Pool Board and removing an insurance industry representative gives Pool clients greater influence and lessens that of the insurance interests

While these aspects of ESHB 2540 would create positive changes for Pool clients, there is still concern surrounding the increase in deductibles, prescription drug benefits, and out-of-pocket expenses. Health care costs have already reached a staggering level. According to a report by the Working for Health Coalition, overall costs of health insurance premiums, co-pays and deductibles have increased three times as fast as salaries.¹ Similarly, premiums for employment-based health insurance rose 13.9 percent, making it the third consecutive year that premiums increased by double-digits.² Increasing costs are putting undue strain on Washingtonians. There are fears that increase in fees will lead to higher premiums, loss of coverage, and prompt carriers to stop offering individual health coverage.

Conclusion

ESHB 2540 proposes beneficial changes to the Washington State Insurance Health Pool; nonetheless, the Commission on Hispanic Affairs encourages the committee to reexamine the increase in deductibles, prescription drug benefits, and out-of-pocket expenses.

We hope that the committee will take this testimony into account when considering ESHB 2540.

¹ Working for Health Coalition "Risky Business: Working People Losing Health Care Coverage" <<http://workingforhealth.org/RiskyBusiness.pdf>> p 4, 16 Feb 2006.

² "Risky Business," 4.

The people of the State of Washington have tasked the Commission on Hispanic Affairs with advising the Governor, the Legislature, and state and local agencies on issues that affect the Hispanic community of the State

Legislative Testimony - 2540

Contact: Uriel Iñiguez, CHA Director (360) 725-5660 uiniiguez@cha.wa.gov

LEGISLATIVE TESTIMONY



COMMISSION ON HISPANIC AFFAIRS

The Commission on Hispanic Affairs supports changes to the juvenile waiver of rights as put forth in HB 2343.

HB 2343

- Requires law enforcement to notify a child's parent, guardian, or custodian when he/she is taken into custody
- Requires law enforcement to allow parents, guardians, or custodians of the child in custody to consult upon request with the child unless the child objects or if the parent is a codefendant or a victim
- Adds the right to consult with a parent, guardian, or custodian to the standard "Miranda Rights" to create "Juvenile Miranda Rights"
- Prohibits juveniles from waiving their right to counsel unless he/she has consulted with counsel and the waiver is knowing and voluntary

The Need to Modify the Juvenile Waiver of Rights

--Protects juveniles in a ruthless court system.

--Allows parents greater access to their children during a time of crisis and when the child may need greater support

--Helps to make sure that kids aren't being taken advantage. Makes some provisions that take account of the fact that the kid might be a little overwhelmed with the whole situation and many be out of their league.

What is the motivation behind the legislation?

What was the need for the legislation?

Conclusion

We hope that the committee will consider these reasons when considering HB 2343.

The people of the State of Washington have tasked the Commission on Hispanic Affairs with advising the Governor, the Legislature, and state and local agencies on issues that affect the Hispanic community of the State

Legislative Testimony - 2343

Contact: Uriel Iñiguez, CHA Director (360) 725-5660 uiñiguez@cha.wa.gov

2-14-06

LEGISLATIVE TESTIMONY



COMMISSION ON HISPANIC AFFAIRS

The Commission on Hispanic Affairs supports expanding participation in state purchased health care programs as put forth in HB 2398.

HB 2398

- Requires individuals applying for the Basic Health Plan as non-subsidized enrollees to complete a standard health questionnaire
- Individuals falling into the top 8 percent of most costly cases will be denied coverage under the Basic Health Plan and will be referred to the Washington State Health Insurance Pool

The Need to Improve Health Care Availability for Washingtonians

According to a study released by the Working for Health Coalition¹, a coalition of public and private organizations dedicated to informing the public about health care issues, health insurance premiums have risen four times faster than worker's earnings and many employees pay nearly 17 percent of their income in out-of-pocket health care expenses. As health care costs rise, more pressure is being placed on state services like Medicaid and the Basic Health Plan (BHP). These programs are crucial for supporting low-income workers without employment-based health insurance. It is necessary to protect them so that they can effectively serve low-income clients.

HB 2398 proposes changes to the enrollment process for the Basic Health Plan that will do just that. By requiring non-subsidized enrollees to complete a standard health questionnaire—the same that must be completed when applying for private health insurance—the BHP will be able to refer applicants that fall into the top eight percent of most costly cases to the Washington State Health Insurance Pool (WSHIP). These applicants will receive health care via the WSHIP thereby saving the resources of the BHP for lower-income employees.

While HB 2398 will help all low-income employees, the proposed changes will be beneficial to employees from ethnically and racially diverse backgrounds that have the highest rates of poverty. For example, Hispanics experience higher unemployment and are employment at lower-wage jobs than other racial and ethnic groups.² Furthermore, the occupational gap between Hispanics and Whites is growing due to a high concentration of Hispanics in low wage jobs with little educational requirements. Thus, the increases in health care costs have hit the Hispanic community hard. HB 2398 will allow more low-income employees to receive precious and necessary health care through BHP.

Conclusion

HB 2398 proposes changes to the enrollment policies of the Basic Health Plan that will ensure that needed health care services will be provided to more low-income employees.

We hope that the committee will take this testimony into account when considering HB 2398.

¹ Bob Brittenden, MD and Amity Neumeister, "Risky Business: Working People Losing Health Care Coverage," Working for Health Coalition <workingforhealth.org/RiskyBusiness.pdf> 15 Feb 2006.

² "The Occupational Status and Mobility of Hispanics," The Pew Hispanic Center <<http://pewhispanic.org/reports/report.php?ReportID=59>>, 15 Feb 2006.

The people of the State of Washington have tasked the Commission on Hispanic Affairs with advising the Governor, the Legislature, and state and local agencies on issues that affect the Hispanic community of the State

Legislative Testimony - 2398

Contact: Uriel Iñiguez, CHA Director (360) 725-5660 uiniiguez@cha.wa.gov

LEGISLATIVE TESTIMONY



COMMISSION ON HISPANIC AFFAIRS

The Commission on Hispanic Affairs supports modifying the preexisting condition limitation requirements of the Basic Health Plan as put forth in HB 2455.

HB 2455

- Modifies the preexisting condition limitation
- Allows applicants with a preexisting condition participating in community health programs to credit some of their time to the preexisting condition limitation

The Need to Modify the Preexisting Condition Limitation on the Basic Health Plan

People who are most in need of health care coverage are low-income patients with a preexisting condition. Yet, despite having a clear and current need to receive care, the Basic Health Plan (BHP) requires that these applicants wait the entire period before being eligible for treatment for a preexisting condition. The waiting period is nine months—far too long for many patients with preexisting conditions to go without treatment.

HB 2455 proposes changes that would provide assistance to some BHP applicants. Applicants with a preexisting condition who are also participating in a community-based program that provides health services for the uninsured, may credit a period of continued participation toward the BHP's preexisting condition limit. This would allow applicants to receive the care they need in a timely manner and prevent possible deterioration of their condition due to lack of medical care.

This modification to the preexisting condition waiting period is also crucial because it affects the most vulnerable clients of the health care system: low-income workers and their families. Low-income patients may not be able to afford to go without treatment or afford to pay for treatment from out-of-pocket. Allowing community-based health programs to count toward the waiting period will relieve some of the pressure on these families and allow them quicker access to the needed medical care.

Conclusion

HB 2455 will provide valuable assistance to low-income families and will make it easier for applicants with preexisting medical conditions to receive the medical attention they need.

We hope that the committee will take this testimony into account when considering HB 2455.

The people of the State of Washington have tasked the Commission on Hispanic Affairs with advising the Governor, the Legislature, and state and local agencies on issues that affect the Hispanic community of the State

Legislative Testimony - 2455

Contact: Uriel Iñiguez, CHA Director (360) 725-5660 iniguez@cha.wa.gov

2-16-06

LEGISLATIVE TESTIMONY



COMMISSION ON HISPANIC AFFAIRS

The Commission on Hispanic Affairs supports the removal of WASL scores on high school transcripts as put forth in HB 2733.

HB 2733

- Removes the requirement that a student's highest WASL score and level achieved be included on the standardized high school transcript.

Removing WASL Scores from High School Transcripts

Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL) scores should be removed from the transcripts of graduating high school seniors. First and foremost, the WASL is a graduating requirement only for Washington State high schools. It is not an entrance requirement for Washington State higher education institutions; nor one for such institutions outside of the state. Therefore, this information is not necessary for institutions of higher education. If a student did not pass the WASL, he/she would not receive a diploma and would not be eligible to apply to a higher education institution. If a student has passed the WASL—regardless of the scores and the level—he or she would receive a diploma. The diploma should suffice for the institution in question that the student has met state standards and the student's coursework and application materials should guide the rest of the selection process.

Furthermore, including WASL scores on student's transcripts may be detrimental to them in the college application process. Studies have shown that the WASL less accurately assesses the academic competence of certain student demographics, including Hispanic students. As such, it is also not an accurate assessment of college readiness for these students. In addition, it may work against them when vying for competitive slots in college acceptance.

Conclusion

Removing WASL scores from high school transcripts prevents superfluous information on student's transcripts and also compensates for the WASL's bias against certain demographics.

We hope that the committee will take this testimony into account when considering HB 2733.

The people of the State of Washington have tasked the Commission on Hispanic Affairs with advising the Governor, the Legislature, and state and local agencies on issues that affect the Hispanic community of the State

Legislative Testimony - 2733

Contact: Uriel Iñiguez, CHA Director (360) 725-5660 uiñiguez@cha.wa.gov

2-13-06

LEGISLATIVE TESTIMONY



COMMISSION ON HISPANIC AFFAIRS

The Commission on Hispanic Affairs supports reviewing the representation of people of color in Washington State's public school curriculum as put forth in HB 2823.

HB 2823

- Directs the University of Washington College of Education to determine if the history, contributions, and contemporary experiences of people of color are fully and accurately represented and included in Washington's public school curriculum
- Directs the University of Washington College of Education to identify barriers in the public school curriculum that would hinder adoption of such a curriculum

The Need for Accurate Representation of People of Color in School Curriculum

As Washington's public schools become more racially and ethnically diverse, it is necessary to adjust school curriculums to reflect these changes. Three concrete examples link racial and ethnic minority student success to curriculums that accurately represent racial and ethnic diversity and the contributions of people from those groups:

1. Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL). Results of the WASL have shown that certain minority groups consistently under perform. In the 2004-2005 school year, 77% of white and 78.8% of Asian students met state standards on the Reading WASL. Only 55.8% of Native American students, 53.1% of Hispanic students, and 53.7% of Black students met the state standard. It is unfair to evaluate students with a test that systematically underrates the performance of certain groups on account of race and/or ethnicity.
2. Culturally Sensitive Instruction and Examples. The director of the Commission on Hispanic Affairs stated in a speech to community college presidents that "study after study, statistic after statistic, show that students from ethnically and racially diverse backgrounds have the highest rates of poverty and the highest school dropout rates." He argues that these students would benefit from a curriculum that supports the achievements of people from their race and/or ethnicity who can serve as examples for educational achievement and personal success.
3. Several studies on the lack of minority teachers in school systems adversely affect minority student performance. Lack of racial and/or ethnic examples has been shown to negatively affect the retention rate of minority students attending colleges as well as their career and life aspirations.¹

These examples demonstrate the benefit of accurate representation of people of color in the public school curriculum and the need for a review of curriculums to see how accurate representation can be improved.

Conclusion

Washington State needs a multi-cultural curriculum for a multi-cultural student body that currently accounts for (according to the Superintendent of Public Instruction's Office) approximately 30% of students in Washington State.

We hope that the committee will take this testimony into account when considering HB 2823.

¹ Yopp et al. 1991, Martinez (1991), p24.

The people of the State of Washington have tasked the Commission on Hispanic Affairs with advising the Governor, the Legislature, and state and local agencies on issues that affect the Hispanic community of the State

Legislative Testimony - 2823

Contact: Uriel Iñiguez, CHA Director (360) 725-5660 uiniiguez@cha.wa.gov

LEGISLATIVE TESTIMONY



COMMISSION ON HISPANIC AFFAIRS

The Commission on Hispanic Affairs supports the creation of the Department of Early Learning as an executive branch agency put forth in HB 2964/SB 6466.

HB 2964/SB 6466

- Establishes the Department of Early Learning as an executive branch agency
- Creates a cabinet-level position to coordinate and consolidate early learning programs

The Department of Early Learning

In an effort to improve education across Washington State, the 2005 Legislature created the Washington Early Learning Council. The Council was joined by Washington Learns, Governor Gregoire's initiative to examine the state's education system, to recommend that a cabinet-level early learning position be created and to establish the Department of Early Learning as an executive branch.

HB 2964/SB 6466 encompasses the recommendations made by the Council and Washington Learns. These changes will benefit young students throughout Washington State in several ways:

- Many educators and researchers have found that early childhood education is beneficial to a child's cognitive and social development, in addition to countless studies documenting the potential for learning that young children possess.¹ As education is becoming increasingly important and for a child's future, taking advantage of these formative years is essential.
- Creating a department to manage early learning will help to organizationally streamline the effort to improve education. Currently, early learning programs are managed by the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS), the Department of Community Trade and Economic Development (CTED), the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, as well as numerous committees, commissions, and taskforces. HB 2964/SB 6466 proposes coordinating all efforts under the Department of Early Childhood Learning. This will improve the quality of administration and education.
- The Department of Early Childhood Education will be a venue for further improvement of the education system. Again, by providing a solid organizational structure for early childhood education, necessary policy improvements will be achieved more quickly and students, parents, and legislators will have greater resources and better access to them.

Conclusion

HB 2964/SB 6466 proposes necessary and timely changes to the administration of early childhood learning programs. Creating a cabinet-level position and a Department of Early Childhood Learning will benefit all Washingtonians.

We hope that the committee will consider these reasons when considering HB 2964/SB 6466.

¹ "Research on Early Childhood Education," School Improvement Research Series, NW Regional Educational Laboratory <www.nwrel.org/scpd/sirs/3/topsyn3.html>, 14 Feb 2006.

The people of the State of Washington have tasked the Commission on Hispanic Affairs with advising the Governor, the Legislature, and state and local agencies on issues that affect the Hispanic community of the State

Legislative Testimony – HB 2964/SB6466

Contact: Uriel Iñiguez, CHA Director (360) 725-5660 iniguez@cha.wa.gov

LEGISLATIVE TESTIMONY



COMMISSION ON HISPANIC AFFAIRS

The Commission on Hispanic Affairs supports the revision of the state's school assessment system as put forth in HB 2998/SB 6618.

HB2998/SB 6618

- Revises the high school assessment system
- Requires the State Board of Education (SBE) to develop options for student assessment other than the WASL
- Permits students to select a certified option other than the WASL
- Makes the Certificate of Academic Achievement a graduation requirement

The Need to Study and Revise Certifying Assessments for High School Graduation

Washington State's graduation assessment test, the WASL, has been the subject of major controversy and scrutiny during the last few years. While the controversy concerns student performance across the board, it is of major concern for ESL and minority students. HB 2998/SB 6618 proposes major changes to the current graduation certification process that will improve the certification process for all students. These changes will especially benefit ESL and minority students who have been over-represented as underperforming on the test.

First and foremost, HB 2998/SB 6618 will review national tests to compare performance with testing levels. This review will help determine the usefulness and effectiveness of testing and ensure higher standards and quality for all students. Second, students undergoing testing in the 2008-2009 school year will be offered a choice of assessments to satisfy state standards and receive their Certificate of Academic Achievement (CAA). Portfolios, industry certification tests, and other assessments for workforce and college/university readiness will be considered. Third, culturally relevant assessments for students in demographic groups shown to have difficulty with the WASL or who are over-represented as not meeting the WASL standard will be examined and adopted. In addition, HB 2998/SB 6618 will remove the state's requirement of including WASL scores in student transcripts and will not require students to pay out-of-pocket expenses for retaking subject sections of the WASL, thereby, removing two unnecessary hurdles to student success.

The provisions that HB 2998/SB 6618 makes for students in the upcoming school year will be particularly beneficial for students in demographics that have consistently experienced difficulties with the WASL. HB 2998/SB 6618 gives these students a more even playing field and removes unnecessary barriers to their future success.

Conclusion

HB 2998/SB 6618 enacts changes that are both timely and necessary for improving Washington State's school assessment system. It makes testing options better for all students and it will also provide Washington educators and parents with a more accurate and equitable assessment of students.

We hope that the committee will take this testimony into account when considering HB 2998/SB 6618.

The people of the State of Washington have tasked the Commission on Hispanic Affairs with advising the Governor, the Legislature, and state and local agencies on issues that affect the Hispanic community of the State

Legislative Testimony - 1685

Contact: Uriel Iñiguez, CHA Director (360) 725-5660 uiniguez@cha.wa.gov

2-7-06

LEGISLATIVE TESTIMONY



COMMISSION ON HISPANIC AFFAIRS

The Commission on Hispanic Affairs supports the creation of stronger penalties for violators of the Minimum Wage Act as put forth in SHB 1311.

SHB 1311

- ensures that employers who violate the wage payment laws pay workers unpaid wages in addition to interest of up to 1% per month on unpaid wages and civil penalties of no more than ten times the wages owed for each violation per employee
- establishes fines of no less than \$100 and no more than \$1000 for violators of wage payment laws
- makes failure to pay wages a misdemeanor crime

The Need for Stiffer Penalties for Violators of Wage Payment Laws

In Washington State, the minimum wage is \$7.63. While we have the highest minimum wage in the US,¹ it does not remove workers from an economically precarious position. A person working forty hours a week, fifty weeks per year will only make \$15, 260 annually. This amount is only \$17 more than the federal poverty line for a family of three according to 2005 poverty thresholds² and considering that many minimum wage workers are not teenagers earning pocket money but adults struggling to meet their daily necessities in which every penny counts. According to the AFL-CIO, if the 1968 minimum wage had kept up with inflation, minimum wage workers would be receiving around \$9 per hour.³ Furthermore, as Economic Policy Institute economist Jeff Chapman explains, “the minimum wage falling in real terms is a significant factor in why inequality has been growing over the last few decades.”⁴

As a result, wages earned by minimum wage workers are essential to their economic survival. Employers who refuse to pay workers their full earned wages are stealing from their employees and should face appropriate penalties. SHB 1311 will (1) require employers to pay unpaid wages in addition to monthly interest charges, (2) enact monetary civil penalties, (3) establish fines between \$100 and \$1000 dollars for violators, (4) make wage payment violations a misdemeanor. Adding these penalties to the current wage payment laws will help ensure that workers receive the pay they have earned.

Conclusion

Current penalties for violations of wage payment laws are not strict enough. SHB 1311 will provide stiffer penalties to protect minimum wage workers and punish violators. It also implies that Washington State is serious about protecting the rights of Washington’s most vulnerable workers as well as fair and honest business practices.

We hope that the committee will take this testimony into account when considering SHB 1311.

¹ Department of Labor and Industries www.lni.wa.gov/WorkplaceRights/Wages/Minimum/default.asp 7 Feb 2006.

² US Census Bureau < www.census.gov/hhes/www/poverty/threshld/thresh05.html > 7 Feb 2006

³ The New Standard < newstandardnews.net/content/index.cfm/items/1928 > 7 Feb 2006.

⁴ The New Standard < newstandardnews.net/content/index.cfm/items/1928 > 7 Feb 2006.

The people of the State of Washington have tasked the Commission on Hispanic Affairs with advising the Governor, the Legislature, and state and local agencies on issues that affect the Hispanic community of the State

Legislative Testimony - 1311

Contact: Uriel Iñiguez, CHA Director (360) 725-5660 uiniiguez@cha.wa.gov

2-7-06

LEGISLATIVE TESTIMONY



COMMISSION ON HISPANIC AFFAIRS

The Commission on Hispanic Affairs supports collective bargaining between family child care providers and the Governor as put forth in SB 6165.

SB 6165

- Amends the Public Employees' Collective Bargaining Act (PECBA) to:
 - establish family child care providers as “public employees” and the Governor as the “public employer” for the purpose of collective bargaining
 - govern collective bargaining between the Governor and the family child care providers' bargaining representative.
- Effectively creates family child care providers as a union

Collective Bargaining Between the Governor and Family Child Care Providers

The majority of families in Washington State rely on two incomes to maintain a comfortable standard of living. As a result, working parents must find child care for their children while they are at work. As the cost of child care continues to rise, working parents find themselves under more pressure to work and with fewer options for their children's care. Rising costs combined with decreasing reimbursement subsidy rates means that many family child care providers are being forced to go out of business. These changes are negatively impacting both the quality and choice of child care that is available for working parents.

By creating family child care providers as “public employees” and the Governor as a “public employer,” SB 6165 allows family child care providers to collectively bargain with the government over rate subsidies and reimbursement, health and welfare benefits, professional development and training, and labor-management committees. SB 6165 enables family child care providers to efficiently and professionally provide services to working families in Washington.

High quality child care supported by SB 6165 has additional importance to working parents. As numerous studies have shown, the early years of a child are the formative years in which learning and brain development are crucial. SB 6165 will support quality family child care providers and ensure excellence in early childhood education.

Conclusion

By establishing a collective bargaining relationship between the Governor and family child care providers, SB 6165 will ensure that working parents have high quality and affordable care for their young children.

We hope that the committee will bear in mind this testimony when considering SB 6165.

The people of the State of Washington have tasked the Commission on Hispanic Affairs with advising the Governor, the Legislature, and state and local agencies on issues that affect the Hispanic community of the State

Legislative Testimony - 6165

Contact: Uriel Iñiguez, CHA Director (360) 725-5660 uiniguez@cha.wa.gov

2-7-06

LEGISLATIVE TESTIMONY



COMMISSION ON HISPANIC AFFAIRS

The Commission on Hispanic Affairs supports the creation of a demonstration project and an alternative route conditional scholarship program as put forth in HB 6171.

This bill takes a first step in improving the condition of education for bilingual children; a group that has been thus far poorly served by the Washington State education system.

The Need for Bilingual and Bi-cultural Teachers

Victoria Jobe, an English-Language-Learner (ELL) herself, stated in *Childhood Education* (Fall 2005, Vol.82, Iss.1) that changing two elements about the education system could mean great improvements for ELL students. They are:

1. "The lack of teacher preparation"
2. "Watered-down curriculum"

Teacher preparation, according to Jobe, should include education about the different cultures of all students. She provides the following example: ELL learners are often visual and kinesthetic yet most teachers still use lectures to teach their students. These are the types of changes that could be included in the professional education or continuing education of teachers. She also provides the example of teachers not knowing that culturally, Hispanic children might look away when being reprimanded; many Anglo teachers might take this as a sign of disrespect.

To address her second change, Jobe uses her own experiences and those she has witnessed in the school where she is principal. She provides examples of teachers who see ELL students as "problems" and who provide their students with work that is far below the level at which they should be learning. Jobe also provides an example of ELL students sitting in the back of the class coloring.

Martinez and Martinez discuss the importance of bi-cultural teachers as well. "One out of three pupils is a person of color, by contrast, 85 percent of today's teachers are white women and 40 percent of today's private schools don't have a single teacher of color on staff" (*The Hispanic Outlook in Higher Education*, Nov. 2005).

Sharon Vaughn (et.al.) cites research in which smaller class size and effective instruction practices illustrate that students that are behind in reading skills can catch up within a year. I have personally spoken with a few teachers who have worked with bilingual students as well as a few bilingual students who attended ELL classes and there is a consensus on what these people told me and the research findings.

One former ELL student stated that at the high school level, students in ELL were being taught words like 'apple' and other very basic things. ELL classes need teachers that understand the language and the culture in order to develop lessons that meet the student needs. On the flip side of the coin, a Special Ed teacher that I spoke to stated that she often had ELL students in her class. She would have these students for only 40 minutes a day to work on their reading. Reading was the only subject that was covered. These classes are usually not small enough to meet the needs of these children that are more deprived than the typical student. Students that are learning English need to be taught other subjects, more than just basic words, phonics and grammar especially if we are testing them in all subjects.

Conclusion

Although this commentary is descriptive of a greater reform needed in ELL programs in this state, we believe that it is that much more reason to support HB 6171. This bill is a start in solving many of the problems that are being encountered in ELL. These are kids whose futures depend on legislators, educational administrators and teachers.

We hope that the committee will consider these reasons when considering HB 6171

The people of the State of Washington have tasked the Commission on Hispanic Affairs with advising the Governor, the Legislature, and state and local agencies on issues that affect the Hispanic community of the State

Legislative Testimony - 6171

Contact: Uriel Iñiguez, CHA Director (360) 725-5660 uiniiguez@cha.wa.gov

2-1-06

LEGISLATIVE TESTIMONY



COMMISSION ON HISPANIC AFFAIRS

The Commission on Hispanic Affairs supports the passage of HB 6194

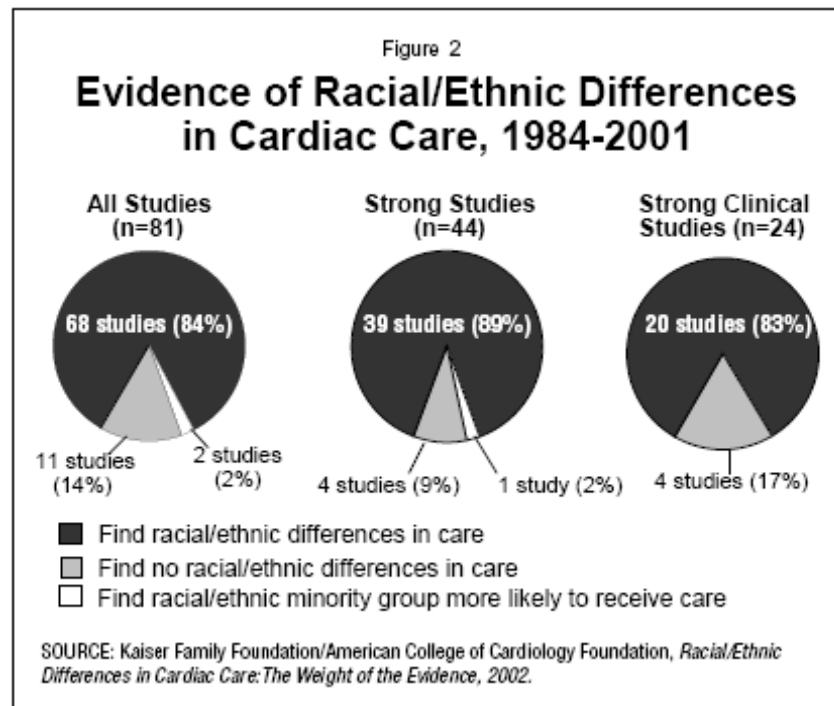
The creation of a multicultural health requirement for health care professionals would greatly benefit the clients whose needs are not being adequately met in the health care industry. There is an overwhelming amount of evidence pointing to the decline in health care based on other factors such as race, socioeconomic status and education level. For Hispanics in Washington State, the likelihood of having a lower education level and lower socioeconomic status are higher than mainstream culture.

Background

There is a difference in cultural values when it comes to health care. This is something that providers need to be aware of when working with different patients. “Among the top ten causes of death for African American and Latinas are conditions connected to pregnancy and childbirth, not found in the top ten causes of death for White women” (Kirk & Okazawa-Rey, 2001). Borrell, in the *American Journal of Public Health*, says of Hispanics: “Compared with White people, Hispanics are younger, have a lower proportion of people aged 25 years and older with at least a high school diploma, are more likely to be unemployed, are less likely to earn \$35,000 or more, are more likely to live in poverty, and are less likely to have health insurance” (Mar. 2005, Vol.95 Iss.3).

The Need for Multi-Cultural Education

The March 2005 Kaiser Family Foundation Report titled *Policy Challenges and Opportunities in Closing the Racist/Ethnic Divide in Health Care* reviewed studies between 1984-2001 and found that 84% of all studies found that there were racial/ethnic differences in cardiac care.



This 2005 report also discusses the importance of educating health care providers of the health care disparities. Again, the report gives data regarding beliefs doctors hold about disparities; the Kaiser Foundation's chart is shown below:

The people of the State of Washington have tasked the Commission on Hispanic Affairs with advising the Governor, the Legislature, and state and local agencies on issues that affect the Hispanic community of the State

Legislative Testimony - 6194

Contact: Uriel Iñiguez, CHA Director (360) 725-5660 iniguez@cha.wa.gov

2-1-06

Some reasons for the need to incorporate culture into health care at the individual patient-provider level as well as the system level are:¹

- Perception of illness, disease, causal factors, and treatment varies by culture;
- Diverse belief systems exist related to health, healing, and wellness;
- Culture influences help seeking behaviors and attitudes toward health care providers;
- Individual preferences and culture affect traditional and non-traditional approaches to health care;
- Communications between patient and health care provider must be clear;
- Patients have personal experiences of biases within health care systems; and,
- Health care providers from culturally and linguistically diverse groups are under-represented in the current service delivery system.²

Conclusion

House Bill 6194 represents the initiation of work by Washington State that is long overdue for its minority citizens. Many may caution that approving this bill means more work, more money, and more data to track, therefore, we in essence need to be emphasize that change in this area is going to take work, lots of it, and the challenge will be to convince health care professionals, administrators and policy makers to believe that it's worth the work and effort. The ultimate benefit to both the minority and the general community will surely outweigh the costs.

¹ All but the final are quoted from the *Primer for Cultural Proficiency: Towards Quality Health Services for Hispanics*, The National Alliance for Hispanic Health (2001). Library of Congress #00-111673.

² Elena Cohen, Goode T.D., Rationale for Cultural Competence in Primary health Care. Policy Brief 1, National Center for Cultural Competence, Winter, 1999.

The people of the State of Washington have tasked the Commission on Hispanic Affairs with advising the Governor, the Legislature, and state and local agencies on issues that affect the Hispanic community of the State

Legislative Testimony - 6194

Contact: Uriel Iñiguez, CHA Director (360) 725-5660 iniguez@cha.wa.gov

2-1-06

Commission on Hispanic Affairs In support of HB 2582

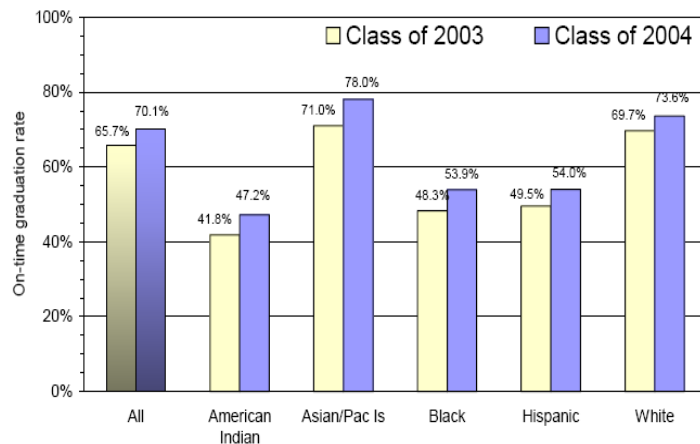
House Bill 2582 addresses students who fail to graduate with their class or who do not attain a certificate of individual or academic achievement for not passing the WASL. It allows these students to continue their education at a community college and would create a positive impact on the Hispanic population in Washington State. It is not the intent of this bill to by-pass the WASL but to encourage students who failed this test to continue their education, thereby gaining additional skills so that one day they will be able to pass the exam and receive their Certificate of Academic Achievement. There are several reasons why Hispanics have high rates of delayed education which correlates with lower high school graduation rates and higher drop-out rates including, among others:

1. **Mobile families in the migrant community**
2. **Higher levels of poverty which could mean children experience more family worries or quit school to help support their family**
3. **Higher levels of self care – which means older children are at home acting as caretakers of younger siblings rather than focusing on school**
(afterschoolalliance.org)
4. **More parents with low levels of education who are unable to assist their children with homework, social adjustment, etc.**
5. **Language learner needs (All but #3, Cortese, 1992).**

According to OSPI, only 54% of Hispanics graduated on time in 2004 (Bylsma & Ireland). Giving this population other options for completing their high school degree when they fall behind will increase the number of minorities gaining a diploma; therefore, this bill will aid in reducing the high drop out rate in Washington State for minorities.

(GRAPH: *Graduation and Drop-out Statistics for Washington's Counties, Districts and Schools, 2003-04*, Bylsma & Ireland)

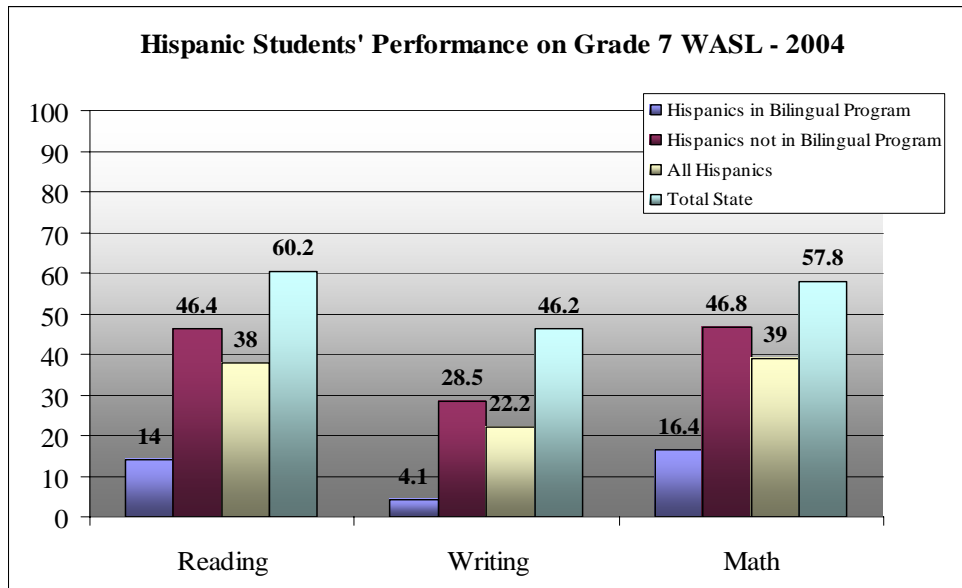
Figure 13: Comparison of On-Time Graduation Rates by Race/Ethnicity



According to the Washington Education Association, Washington ranked 42nd in the nation in 2003 on education spending, up from 44th in 2001. Allowing the monies that would go into a public school to assist an older student in getting a Certificate of Achievement only diverts monies from school districts to Universities/colleges – it does not add more spending.

Allowing assistance for bilingual students under the transitional bilingual instruction program which is already in existence (RCW 28A.180) will give Washington educators answers to a puzzle they have been trying to solve for years with the bilingual and monolingual population – “where do I begin?” By giving assessments in other languages

and by providing extra support to those students; districts, teachers and administrators can begin to formulate a plan to educate those that have been hard to reach up to now. The chart below taken from Judy Norris-Handy at OSPI's Reading Assessment Unit shows that Hispanics involved in the bilingual program are not reaching the levels of learning as Hispanics not in the program. One can only imagine what those numbers would look like if there was not a bilingual instruction program. One can also see why the Commission must support this legislation; performance in and out of the bilingual program is too low.



SOURCE: Judy Norris-Handy *Using 2004 7th Grade WASL Results to Improve Student Learning*

Poverty is a factor in gaining access to education, especially higher education. Minorities are more likely to experience conditions of poverty in Washington State, and in fact, many researchers and administrators believe that the gap between the affluent and the poor is where the greatest impact can be made (NCES, 2003).

Section 8, numbers 7 and 8 of HB 2582, allows for 10% of the increase in graduate and law school tuition to assist low income students. This will benefit not only the Latino population but other minority and low income populations as well. Washington businesses need more educated people and this bill is a stepping stone to provide those people to the workforce. The state is becoming increasingly diverse; therefore, action needs to be taken to make sure that equality in education is not an accident. This bill will increase the success of future generations of the fastest growing minority in this state and this Nation.

The importance of both racial and socioeconomic diversity in classrooms and workforces is abundantly clear. According to the 2004 American Community Survey Data Profile Highlights from the Census Bureau; Hispanics are the largest minority in Washington State, at 14.2% or over half a million people. Lockwood and Secada examined Hispanics in the education system and one of their conclusions was that “school staff and other educational stakeholders must change long-held conceptions of Hispanic students and their families...to recognize that Hispanic families have social capital on which to build” (1999). People from Washington State share some of the same sentiments. In Thurston Community Network’s report *There’s A Little Bit of Culture in Everything We Do* (2003),

minority families were interviewed and spoke about a cultural misunderstanding with regard to their interactions with schools and lower expectations of their children.

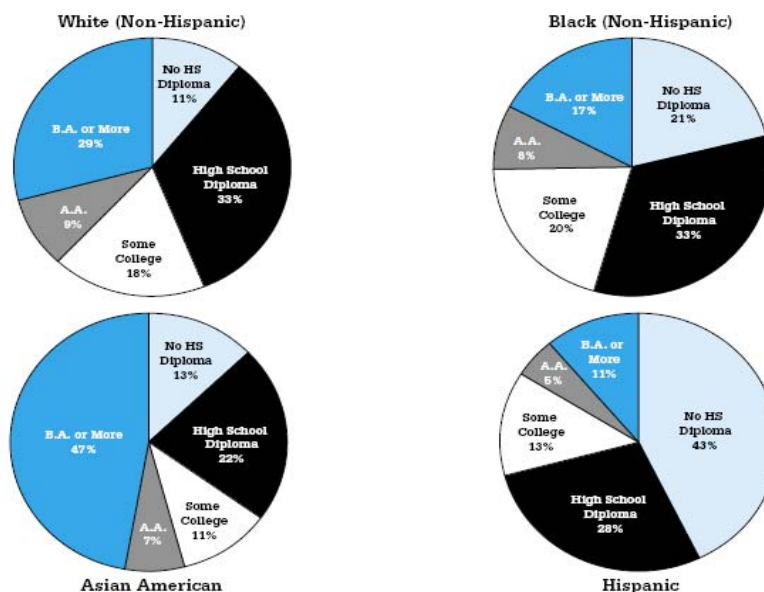
It is vital to the economy, government service providers, and the education system of this state that we provide opportunities for citizens to live productive lives and that is hard to do without the minimal high school diploma. College Board's report titled *Education Pays, 2004* states that:

- The typical bachelor's degree recipient can expect to earn about 73% more over a 40 year working life than the typical high school graduate earns over the same period.
- Average lifetime earnings for individuals with associate degrees are almost 25 percent higher than average lifetime earnings for high school graduates.
- Average lifetime earnings for doctoral degree recipients are between two and a half and three times as high as average lifetime earnings for high school graduates and average lifetime earnings for professional-degree recipients are even higher. (Baum & Payea, 2004).

The chart below illustrates education levels, showing which populations are most impacted by low levels of education.

Level of Education by Race/Ethnicity

Figure 25: Highest Education Level by Race/Ethnicity, 2002



Notes: Includes adults 25 and older. Percents may not sum to 100 percent because of rounding.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau; (2003a), Table 10.

Only 11 percent of Hispanic adults have a four-year college degree, compared to 17 percent of blacks and 29 percent of whites.

SOURCE: Baum & Payea *Education Pays 2004: Trends in Higher Education Series*(www.collegeboard.com)

Conclusion

In conclusion, there is a great need and push to make improvements in many areas of the Washington education system. Anything that will help, the Commission on Hispanic Affairs supports. We recognize that making these improvements in education can also improve rates of teen pregnancy, reduce drop out rates, decrease unemployment and decrease the numbers of people who rely on government assistance. Education is vital

and HB 2582 will assist Washington State in meeting its Constitutional duty “to make ample provision for the education of all children residing within its borders, without distinction or preference on account of race, color, caste, or sex” (Article IX, SS 1).

The people of the State of Washington have tasked the Commission on Hispanic Affairs with advising the Governor, the Legislature, and state and local agencies on issues that affect the Hispanic community of the State.



The Commission on Hispanic Affairs Supports SSB 5910

Background

SSB 5910 will benefit the Hispanic community of Washington State in two ways: it will help Hispanic students afford law school and it will provide more incentive for future attorneys to serve low-income people in legal cases. Specifically, the bill addresses the University of Washington's Public Interest Law program as the only law school in the state that does not have a loan repayment assistance program.

Specific Issues

In *The Georgetown Journal of Legal Ethics*, Cerovsek and Kerr state that "there is about one lawyer for every 240 nonpoor individuals, but only one lawyer for every 9,000 Americans whose low income would qualify for civil legal aid" (2004, p.697). In addition, the Legal Services Corporation, a non-profit that provides low income persons legal aid services throughout the country, saw a decrease in allocated federal funds in 2002 (ibid, p.698).

The Legal Fund of Washington (LFW) has provided over \$6.2 million dollars of funding to programs throughout this state that aid low income persons (Stifter, 2004). Even so, the President of LFW, David Leen states that "more than 88% of those who are eligible and need legal help do not get it" (Stifter, 2004). There is a need for more public interest attorneys in Washington State.

According to The Legal Foundation of Washington's 2004 Annual Report, public interest lawyers services range from helping victims of domestic violence to assisting low income tenants to ensure their rights are not violated. This is important work for the State of Washington. The University of Washington can help increase the number public interest lawyers by participating in such a program.

The people of the State of Washington have tasked the Commission on Hispanic Affairs with advising the Governor, the Legislature, and state and local agencies on issues that affect the Hispanic community of the State

Legislative Testimony - 5910

Contact: Uriel Iñiguez, CHA Director (360) 725-5660 uiniguez@cha.wa.gov

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